Why a Referendum & 3 Demands Explained

What is a referendum?
A referendum is a vote in which every Middlebury student can participate. A referendum is a powerful tool for expressing student body opinion and puts pressure on Middlebury leadership to make the change we want.

This referendum will be held the week of November 10th.

Why is a referendum important?

- To pressure our campus officials to take concrete action to protect the rights of all students, including the rights to free speech and assembly, and to not proactively work with government agencies to infringe on these rights or to target students, no matter their immigration status.
- To show support for students, faculty, and staff who are being targeted or punished for the lawful exercise of their right to freedom of expression, including the right to protest.
- To protect all of our rights to peaceful expression of our beliefs.
- To show that your student body supports the rights of all people regardless of immigration status, country of origin, refugee status, race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or religious affiliation to live with dignity, safety, and full enjoyment of their human rights without discrimination, including the rights to life, freedom, education, and security.

What if a referendum draws negative attention to Middlebury and ends up hurting our community?
As you can read below (under "The 3 Demands of this Referendum – Explained"), our community is under attack no matter what. We might as well do something about it. This referendum seeks to put in place measures to *protect* the most vulnerable members of our community. Silence will not protect us – our biggest danger is anticipatory compliance.

Does whatever happens at Midd matter all that much in the grand scheme of things?
YES.

- Besides the simple fact that these are the lives of our friends and community members, universities are on the frontlines of Trump's attacks on free speech, people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities, ALL OF US. While new executive orders and statements from the White House are pushing schools to monitor and report noncitizen students for their political views, universities and colleges have a responsibility to defend their students, faculty, and staff who are under attack.

- Colleges and universities teach us to think critically, question authority, discuss controversial ideas and dream of a better future – which is exactly why Trump is targeting them. No matter what cause you've chosen to dedicate your time to – this matters. Without safety and freedom of speech on campus, how can we learn about and address all of the desperately urgent issues in today's world?

Why community and collective action is important:
If we don't fight for our rights, we will lose them. Throughout history, student-led protests have driven major change, exposing injustice, demanding accountability, and inspiring hope for a better future. Your action *will* show support for communities suffering in silence, *will* influence the opinion of administration on the vitality of change, *will* provide accurate information about civil liberties and freedoms, and *will* aid in passing a blueprint for the fight to defend safety and civil liberties.

The 3 Demands of this Referendum – Explained:

1. The college will continue to prohibit employees of the college from voluntarily providing information or assistance in response to a request from federal authorities or out-of-state authorities that seeks—

a. to identify, or impose civil or criminal liability or other penalties, including termination or reduction of grant funding, upon a person or entity based on their participation in activities protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution including assembly, petitioning, expression of viewpoints, and speech;

b. to identify or apprehend a person in order to subject them to immigration detention, removal or deportation proceedings; or to prosecute a person or persons for offenses related to immigration status based on their participation in activities protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution including assembly, petitioning expression of viewpoints and speech; and

c. to investigate the sex or gender of a student, faculty, or staff member.

(This simply means that our college will not voluntarily share its resources – including staff time or the data they collect on students and faculty – with federal law enforcement who are seeking to violate our civil rights or target members of our school community based on their exercise of civil rights.)

WHY NEEDED:

In September, UC Berkeley handed over the names of 160 faculty members and students to the Trump administration as part of an investigation into "alleged antisemitic incidents", a move scholars have likened to a "practice from the McCarthy era". The consequences of this compliance could be really terrible for a lot of people's lives, especially the most vulnerable members of our community. They can suffer a lot

of things, especially the international students, including deportation, expulsion, job loss, harassment, surveillance. The message Berkley's capitulation sends is that the government can use accusations of antisemitism to target anyone who says things they don't like. We need to be proactive so this never happens at Middlebury.

2. Revise Middlebury Handbook policy (including, but not limited to Section D.2. ID Cards and Section B.2.b. General Conduct Policy) to require Middlebury officials to provide proof of their own identity before demanding students present identification.

WHY NEEDED:

Currently, our Student Handbook B.2.b states that "Students are expected to identify themselves by showing their Middlebury identification card upon request of Middlebury officials." With increased law enforcement presence in our communities, it is only logical that students are not pressured into providing proof of identity without knowing who is asking.

3. Make clear that pamphleting and social media use are not 'demonstrations' or 'protests' covered by the Middlebury Handbook, and as core expressions of free speech must be free of restriction by the college.

WHY NEEDED:

Currently, students can face severe disciplinary measures for violating campus demonstration and protest policy, but the handbook does not define what counts as a demonstration or protest. This ambiguity exposes individuals to arbitrary disciplinary

action if their expression is retroactively labeled a “protest.” Pamphleting and social media use are expressions of our First Amendment right to free speech and should be protected at Middlebury College, not grounds for censorship and disciplinary action. With freedom of expression on attack at the federal level, it is important to understand and use our right to protest without fear of disciplinary action for violating campus protest policies.